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SIPDIS
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SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: IRAN AND AFGHANISTAN; 2/17/10; BUENOS AIRES

SUMMARY

¶1. Iran's nuclear program continues to make international headlines, with a focus on the increased pressure from the international community on Iran. One opposition paper reported on the role of Brazilian government as a mediator between the Washington and Tehran, as well as the Obama Administration's declaration that it "doesn't rule out any options. In addition, major newspapers printed headlines about the U.S. and Pakistan capturing the Taliban's second-highest ranking leader. End summary.

BRAZILIAN INTERVENTION IN IRAN

¶2. In an article headlined "The Iranian revenge will be terrible," left-of-center, opposition newspaper Critica reports that Brazilian President Lula da Silva will visit Iran in May to "look for solutions" to "avert a larger crisis" over Iran's nuclear program. Critica observed that European Union and U.S. lawmakers welcome Brazil as a mediator, and quoted Republican Rep. Roger Wicker commenting that if "Brazil can persuade Iran...it is something good."

<http://www.criticadigital.com.ar/impresa/inde x.php?secc=nota &nid=38658>

¶3. Clarin, Argentina's largest circulation daily, used newswires from international agencies DPA and AP reporting that Russia had "joined" the U.S. and France in urging Iran to stop increasing its level of uranium enrichment. The newswire notes that Iran's latest move "strengthens suspicions that Tehran wants to build nuclear arms" and that Iran's nuclear program is "an open defiance to the international community."

<http://www.clarin.com/diario/2010/02/17/elmun do/i-02141673.htm>

¶4. Under the headline "Obama already uses the Bush rhetoric on Iran," conservative Ambito Financiero writes that Obama is considering a military option in Iran. Ambito Financiero highlighted White House Press Secretary Robert Gibbs' claim that the U.S. government "doesn't rule out any options" on Iran, and Iran's reluctance to engage in diplomacy is "not pursuing the goals [Iran] officially communicated."

<http://www.ambito.com/diario/noticia.asp?id=5 08289>

¶5. Daily La Prensa covered Brazil's intervention and Iranian President Ahmadinejad's reaction to "welcoming a possible Brazilian mediation in the conflict." However, similar to Ambito Financiero, La Prensa reported that Obama is using similar rhetoric to the Bush Administration, quoting the President as saying "we don't rule out any options."

TALIBAN'S SECOND-IN-COMMAND ARRESTED

¶6. Maria Avignolo, Clarin's Paris correspondent, reported that U.S. and Pakistan authorities' arrest of the Taliban's "number two" leader, Abdul Baradar, is a "hard strike" to the Taliban, but is also "surrounded by mysteries and questions." Avignolo questions Pakistan's motives to arrest Baradar as possibly part of its "strategy to force its participation" in "secret negotiations" between Afghan President Karzai and the Taliban. The article also notes that the U.S. labeled the arrest as a "joint operation" between the CIA and Pakistan, despite Pakistan's "previous public rejection" of these missions due to "profound anti-American

sentiments crossing the country."

<http://www.clarin.com/diario/2010/02/17/elmundo/i-02141671.htm>

¶7. Critica labeled Baradar's arrest as the "largest strike against the Afghan insurgency" since 2001. However, Critica also cautioned that this development does not signify "the final battle" and observed the Taliban's "great capacity to replace leaders quickly," even though the arrest could "delay new operations." Additionally, the article noted the U.S. hope that Pakistan is "more available" to "deny a safe refuge to Afghan militants."

<http://criticadigital.com/impresadigital/index.php?seccion=nota>

&nid=38657

¶8. Second-largest daily La Nacion and financial dailies Ambito Financiero and Buenos Aires Economico reprinted Reuters and EFE newswires giving an overview of the developments surrounding Baradar's arrest. Newswires observed the U.S. achieving its "greatest success" since 2001, but also divulged comments from the Taliban denying Baradar's capture. In addition, financial daily El Cronista reprinted an article from Britain's Financial Times noting that although a U.S. General said six months ago the "West could be destroyed in Afghanistan," Baradar's arrest "has strengthened hopes of rescuing the conflict."

http://www.lanacion.com.ar/nota.asp?nota_id=1234008

<http://www.cronista.com/notas/221406-con-el-arresto-un-lider-talibano-clave-crece-la-esperanza-un-final-negociado-en-afghanistan->

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<http://www.state.sq.gov/p/wha/buenosaires>
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